

to resisting smoking and the advertising and marketing of cigarettes.

More Americans die every year from smoking-related diseases than from AIDS, car accidents, murders, suicides, and fires combined. Today it's estimated that 4.5 million of our children and adolescents smoke. Another 1 million use smokeless tobacco. The problem is getting worse. Smoking rates among eighth graders have risen 50 percent in the last 6 years. One out of every three young people who picks up this deadly habit will have their lives shortened from the terrible diseases caused by smoking. As parents, as leaders, as citizens, all of us have a moral obligation to do what we can to protect them. That's why last August the FDA took bold action to protect our children from the dangers of tobacco.

We knew it would be a tough battle, but the health and well-being of our children are worth that. We set a goal of reducing tobacco use by children and adolescents by 50 percent over 7 years. To do that, we initiated the Nation's first ever comprehensive effort to restrict access and limit the appeal of tobacco to children.

Today is the first day that some of these rules take effect, quite appropriately on David Kessler's last day on the Federal payroll. First, we're making the law of the land what is already the law in every State: no sale of tobacco products to anyone under age 18. Second, we're now requiring age verification by photo ID for anyone under the age of 27 for the purchase of tobacco products.

From now on, in every store in America, our children will be told: No ID, no sale. By requiring ID checks for people under 27, store clerks and managers will no longer have to guess the age of those seeking to buy cigarettes.

Studies show that minors succeed in buying cigarettes over the counter nearly 70 percent of the time. That simply must stop. With these new requirements, we'll help to keep cigarettes out of reach of our young people while giving store clerks and managers a tool they need to make sure they're not inadvertently violating the law by selling to minors.

Before we came out here, Secretary Shalala asked Anna if all of her efforts and all of these efforts were having any impact

in reducing the tendency of her peers to smoke. And she said, "Yeah, a lot of them are quitting because it's too much hassle now." [Laughter] That's the idea. [Laughter] That's good.

Over the last 3 weeks, we've conducted massive education campaigns to let retailers know how they can comply with these new rules. We've even prepared this new guide, "A Retailer's Guide to the New Federal Regulations"—appealing advertising, multi-color. [Laughter] This has been made available to 500,000 retailers around the country. I want every retailer and every community across our Nation to join with us in this important effort.

Parents must continue to be the first line of defense, but all the rest of us have to make these rules work, and the retailers can play a major role. I honestly believe the overwhelming majority of them want to do so, and most of them are parents too. They have children too. We have a common interest in doing this job together. And we hope this guide will help them to achieve that goal.

Cigarettes are still legal for adults. If they want to smoke, they can do so. But we have now clearly as a nation drawn a line where our children are concerned. We have done it together. We are committed together. And now we must make it real together.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:47 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Anna Santiago, Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids 1996 Advocate of the Year.

Statement on the Third Anniversary of the "Brady Act"

February 28, 1997

Today marks the third anniversary of the implementation of the Brady act—one of the most effective public safety measures ever.

The facts speak for themselves. Earlier this week, I announced that during its first 28 months, the Brady act prevented more than 186,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers from buying a handgun. Every month the Brady act blocks an average of 6,600 illegal over-the-counter gun sales, with indicted or con-

victed felons constituting more than 70 percent of the rejections.

These statistics should end any remaining doubt that might exist. The Brady act is working.

This important public safety measure is the result of the tireless efforts of two courageous Americans, Jim and Sarah Brady. The Bradys have waged a moral and political battle to save lives and to keep handguns out of the hands of criminals. Their dedication to ending gun violence and making our streets safer is an inspiration to law enforcement and all Americans. Last year, I was deeply honored to bestow upon Jim the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest honor our Nation can bestow on a citizen.

I look forward to working with the Bradys to pass my antigang and youth violence legislation, which will require child safety locks for all handguns and apply the Brady act to anyone who has committed a violent juvenile offense.

NOTE: Public Law 103-159, "To provide for a waiting period before the purchase of a handgun, and for the establishment of a national instant criminal background check system to be contacted by firearms dealers before the transfer of any firearm," approved November 30, 1993, took effect on February 28, 1994.

Statement on the Death of Peggy Browning

February 28, 1997

Hillary and I were saddened to learn of the death of Peggy Browning. Through her devotion to the law and determination in encouraging fair labor practices, Peggy contributed greatly to constructive and harmonious labor relations in this country. Her distinguished career was marked by compassion, good judgment, and, especially in recent months, courage. Her dedicated service will be sorely missed. Our prayers and sympathies are with her family at this time.

Statement on Signing International Population Assistance Program Legislation

February 28, 1997

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.J. Res. 36, which approves a Presidential finding related to international population programs. Approval of this joint resolution permits the release on March 1 of funds previously appropriated for international population assistance programs administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). In making these funds available without further delay we are assuring that these programs will continue to serve the many millions of women and men whose health and well-being—and ability to plan their own futures—depend on family planning services supported by USAID. Moreover, we are underscoring the indisputable fact that family planning reduces abortion—as best evidenced by significant declines in abortion rates as family planning services are becoming available in Russia and Central and Eastern Europe.

The passage of this joint resolution at the opening of the 105th Congress is particularly gratifying as it signifies what we can accomplish by working together—Democrats and Republicans. By agreeing to secure the timely release of these funds, we are assuring that the United States will continue to lead the world in providing voluntary family planning assistance. More importantly, we are helping the women of the world to prevent millions of unintended pregnancies, permit the healthy spacing of births, prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, reduce recourse to abortion, and avert deaths from childbirth that often leave infants and their siblings motherless.

It is clear to me—and I am delighted that a strong bipartisan group of legislators in the House and Senate has joined in affirming the view—that family planning is a key element of our comprehensive strategy to improve women's health and station in life, and to increase child survival rates. By their votes, Members of Congress have shown their con-